

REMARKS

In response to the Office Action mailed on September 21, 2006, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of all rejections in the outstanding Office Action in view of the foregoing amendments and following remarks. Claims 3, 7-9, 12, 16, 17, 22, 23, 30, and 31 are currently amended. Claims 1, 2, 18-21, and 24-29 are cancelled. Claims 3-17, 22, 23, 30, and 31 are currently pending.

I. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicant notes with appreciation the indication on page 4 of the Office Action that claims 3-7, 9-11, and 22-23 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claims 3, 7-9, 12, 16, 17, 22, 23, 30, and 31 have been amended in this manner. Particularly, claims 3 and 7 have been amended to include the subject matter of claims 1 and 2. Claim 9 has been amended to include the subject matter of claim 1. Claims 8, 12, 16, and 17 have been amended to depend from claim 3. Claims 22 and 23 have been amended to recite the limitations of claims 18, 20, and 21. Claims 30 and 31 have been amended to depend from claim 22. Accordingly, claims 3, 7, 9, 22, and 23, and all claims dependent therefrom, i.e., claims 3-17, 22, 23, 30, and 31 should now be allowable. Acknowledgment of same is respectfully requested.

II. Prior Art Rejections

Claims 1, 2, 8, 16, and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,842,710 to Couture. Claims 12-14, 18-21, 26-28, and 30-31 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as allegedly being unpatentable over Couture in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,641,173 to Cobb, Jr. Although Applicant respectfully disagrees with the basis for these rejections, Applicant has amended claims 8, 12, 16, 17, 30, and 31 to include the allowable subject matter noted above. *See* Remarks § I, *supra*. Accordingly, the prior art rejections are believed to be rendered moot by way of these amendments. Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to withdraw these rejections.

III. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance, and an early indication of the same is courteously solicited. The Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned by telephone at the below listed

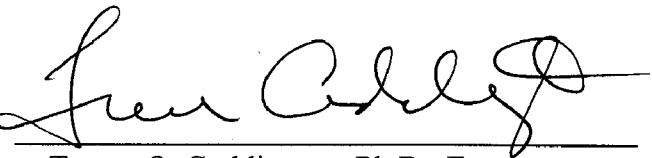
telephone number, in order to expedite resolution of any issues and to expedite passage of the present application to issue, if any comments, questions, or suggestions arise in connection with the present application.

While no fee is believed necessary for the United States Patent and Trademark Office ("PTO") to enter and consider this response, in the event that the PTO requires any additional fee to enter and/or consider this Reply, or to prevent abandonment of the present application, please charge such fee to the undersigned's Deposit Account No. 50-2613.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: December 21, 2006

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